

JOHN A. BROSS

[REDACTED]  
18 February 1983

[REDACTED]

Please forgive my delay in answering your letter. It was an interesting letter which deserved an immediate reply. One thing and another, culminating in a snowstorm, have kept me away from my desk.

I may be responsible for [REDACTED] use of "fashionable" in connection with Intelligence as a profession. I didn't mean that it had become a fad -- simply that the hostility which existed towards the Government, generally, and the idea of a career in Intelligence, specifically, seems to have pretty much disappeared.

[REDACTED]

on her educational career, impressed on her the importance of staying clear of CIA. Any kind of depravity is better than working for CIA, [REDACTED] was told.

[REDACTED]

Obviously the scarcity of jobs, particularly for those graduating with degrees in the social sciences, has made Government service look better than perhaps it did. But I don't think that that is a primary factor in what seems to be the present popularity of CIA. I think a prime cause is the fact that more younger people are thinking along the lines suggested in your letter about the need for accuracy in American estimates of foreign developments and also the need for truth, at least an honest approximation of the truth. I hope they are. In any event, I didn't mean "fashionable" in a frivolous sense -- simply that there is a lot of interest in the subject.

As to how effective CIA is today, and how it is oriented, whenever anybody asks me that question, I am always reminded of the statement falsely attributed to Voltaire, "When I examine myself, I am nothing; when I compare myself, I am superb."

The Agency is well run. The process through which collection systems, some of them technical marvels, are directed toward the acquisition of priority information is well understood and administered. The Agency is staffed on the whole with exceedingly bright and experienced people. The people running the Agency are trying, effectively I think, to organize the analytic talent that exists in the Agency, the Government and in the public sector to develop studies and estimates that are as accurate and responsive to policy requirements as possible. There is no question in my mind that the Agency is here to stay and will continue to play an important, and probably an increasingly important, part in the Government in the future.

Obviously, there are disadvantages to a career in Intelligence or anywhere in the Government. The pay isn't so wonderful. The Agency is more informal and flexible than most Government agencies, but it still is a big bureaucracy. As such, it can hold frustrations for the individual -- frustrations because of the difficulties in getting one's own views on a subject recognized, and frustrations because of the pace at which a large-scale institution inevitably operates. To me, these frustrations are offset by the fact that what the Agency produces is professional -- it is for real -- it counts.

This is all pretty general. If there is anything specific I can help you with, let me know.

Sincerely,

John A. Bross